The Ruins of Medieval Castle in Kōsan-chō,
Hiroshima Prefecture.

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Seventeen ruins of medieval castle have been known in Kōsan-Chō, Hiroshima prefecture. The oldest one is Okubi castle as far as being dated. It was dated back to the end of 12th century A.D. and Tachibana Kanetaka (Geshi of the Kuwahara) was thought to be the founder of this castle. The newest one is Numa castle, which was dated back to the early 16th century A.D. The rest of the castles in this region might have been founded between these centuries.

The distribution of these castles are concentrated along the Ashida river and the area divided by the Ashida river and the road from Higashi-Uehara to Takayama. This character indicates that their main functions were to govern their territories and to prevent the enemies’ invasion.

 Though the castles at this time are generally fortified by the earthworks and the moats, these in this region are characterized by poorer artificial features and richer utilizations of geographical features, such as the ridge lines or sumits of the mountain for their fortifications. It is true to cut the moats and raise the earthworks by moats’ soil cause the effective guard line. These features can be seen only at restricted parts of Kosera and Sandake castles. Although most of the castles in this region are formed by simply cutting the mountaintops, for the mountains in this region have many steep slopes and revealing boulders, which they formed the natural fortifications by themselves. It is also characterized that the utilization of the stone walls are coarse and restricted only the retaining walls of the Kaku (enclosure) formed stairlike.

These castles can be classified into three types according to their plan, that is, oval, concentric circle, and ladder shape. They can be seen at the particular geographical features, that is, the oval type is on the isolated mountains, the concentric circle type is on the tongue-shaped terrace and the ladder shape occupies from mountain top to riege lidge lines. Hirano castle in Sera-cho is
interestingly similar to those of Kanto region, which are called Yato (mouth of the valley) castles.

As the recent deterioration of the mountain forest maintenance has caused the dense bush, brambles and cogongrasses, it makes difficult to explore these ruins. Also it is difficult to observe or to map their whole features. As this tendency is becoming worse, it is necessary to carry out these surface investigations as soon as possible.